

September 15, 2014

Patrick O'Donnell, Clerk of the Legislature
State Capitol, Room 2018
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

Nebraska Statute 68-1207.01 requires the Department of Health and Human to submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature outlining child welfare and juvenile services caseloads, factors considered in their establishment, and the fiscal resources needed to maintain them. The report must contain the following:

1. A comparison of caseloads established by the Department of Health and Human Services with the workload standards recommended by national child welfare organizations, and the fiscal resources necessary to maintain such caseloads in Nebraska;
2. The number of child welfare and juvenile service workers employed by the State of Nebraska, the number of child welfare and juvenile service workers that provide direct services to children and families under contract with the State of Nebraska, and the average length of employment in these positions, by health and human services area and statewide;
3. The average caseload of child welfare and juvenile service workers employed by the State of Nebraska and the average caseload of child welfare and juvenile service workers that provide direct services to children and families under contract with the State of Nebraska, and the outcomes of these cases, by health and human services area and statewide; and
4. The average cost of training child welfare and juvenile service workers employed by the State of Nebraska and those providing direct services to children and families under contract with the State of Nebraska, by health and human services area and statewide.

I am submitting this report to fulfill the above requirements for State Fiscal Year 2014.

Respectfully,



Thomas D. Pristow, MSW, ACSW, Director
Division of Children & Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services

Attachment.

Department of Health & Human Services



Division of Children & Family Services

Caseload Report

SFY 2013/2014

Legislative History

In 1990, LB 720 directed the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to establish standards for child welfare and juvenile service caseloads and to report to the Governor and the Legislature every two years on the resources it needs to implement those standards. In response, DHHS' Joint Labor/Management Workload Study Committee examined several key factors that workers identified as affecting their workload, including: (1) urban or rural work locations; (2) vacant positions; (3) availability of clerical support; and (4) travel requirements. The Committee summarized their recommendations in a Workload Study Findings and Recommendations Summary Report in July 1992.

In 2005, LB 264 required DHHS to include in its legislative report information on child welfare and juvenile service workers who are employed by private entities with which the State of Nebraska contracts for child welfare and juvenile services. The law requires DHHS to submit the report annually.

In 2012, LB 961 required DHHS and the pilot project Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC) to utilize the workload criteria of the standards established as of January 1, 2012, by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). DHHS is required to submit an annual report that includes changes in the standards of the CWLA or its successor.

Below is a table containing the operational definitions utilized in accordance with CWLA guidance.

Table 1 Caseload Type	Definition	Caseload Standards	Description	Measurement / Count
Initial Assessment	Active, open child abuse/neglect investigations conducted by Initial Assessment Worker	1:12 families (urban) 1:10 families (rural)	This does not mean that the worker can be assigned 10 or 12 new cases each month unless all 10 or 12 cases from the previous month are closed. This is a rolling number. Cases assigned the previous month are carried over and counted toward the total number of 10 or 12.	Family
	Mixed; Initial Assessment and Ongoing Caseload	1:7 Children Out of Home. One child=a case 1:3 Families in home. One family=a case 1:4 Families for Initial Assessment. One family=a case Total of 14 cases assigned	For Ongoing Case management: In-Home or out-of-home Voluntary or Court-Involved	Case
Ongoing: Includes ICPC and Court Supervision	Children residing In-Home=no children have been removed from the home due to DHHS involvement	1:17 Families	Open and active voluntary with children placed in the home. These children have never been removed and are not court involved.	Family
	*Children residing in a planned, permanent home (parent, adoptive parent, legal guardian)	1:17 Families	Open and active court involved families with the child(ren) in a planned, permanent home. These are children who are still in DHHS custody and court involved.	Family
	Mixed; one or more wards in home, one or more wards out of home within the same family	1:10 OOH Wards 1:7 In-Home families Total 1:17	Open and active Court Involved children. Count only wards and does not involve non-ward siblings.	Ward =each ward out of the home count as one case each

			Family=any number of wards in the home count as one case
Children are out of the home	1:16 Children	These are court involved and non-court involved cases where children are placed formally out of the parental/guardian home (This includes voluntary placement agreements).	Child=Each child placed outside the home is counted as one case

*A planned permanent placement will be defined as a home which will provide permanency for a child, this includes:

1. Child returns from out of home care and resides with a parent.
2. Child resides in a pre-adoptive placement with a signed adoptive placement agreement.
3. Child's permanency plan is guardianship and child lives with identified guardian.

During this reporting period, DHHS continued to contract with the Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC) for case management services in the Eastern Service Area (ESA). DHHS remains responsible for case management in the Southeast Service Area (SESA), Northern Service Area (NSA), Central Service Area (CSA) and the Western Service Area (WSA). DHHS also continues to be responsible for conducting all initial assessments in each of the five Service Areas.

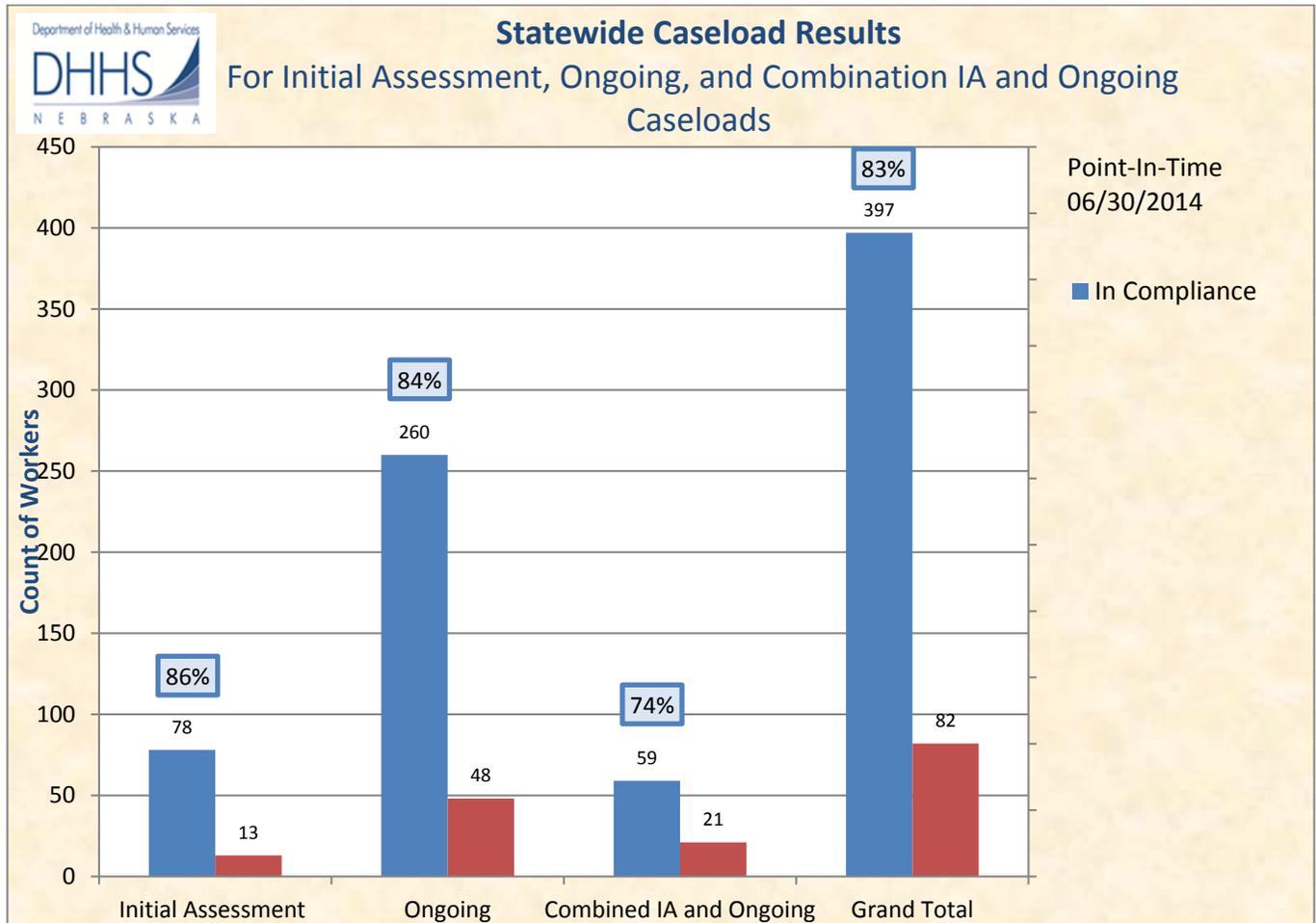
Comparison of caseloads established by DHHS with the workload standards recommended by national child welfare organizations, and the fiscal resources necessary to maintain such caseloads in Nebraska and average caseload of child welfare and juvenile service workers employed by the State of Nebraska and under contract with the State of Nebraska

Youth who were previously made state wards in the DCFS system for status offenses and delinquency acts (LB561), are now placed with the Judicial Branch under the supervision of a Probation Officer. Beginning October 1, 2013, any youth before the juvenile court for a status offense or delinquency act could no longer be placed in the care and custody of DCFS. The law also gave an avenue for existing youth in the DCFS system to have a new disposition moving them from state custody to probation supervision. At the onset, this population equated to approximately 1,500 youth.

While the intent was to move all existing youth from DCFS to Probation, a small number will remain with DCFS for various reasons beyond the full implementation date of July 1, 2014. DCFS will maintain custody for youth who are dually involved in the abuse/neglect system and the Probation system. Youth who are committed to the DCFS Office of Juvenile Services for placement at a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center will continue to be state wards during placement and will continue to be counted in data for DCFS. DCFS continues to monitor youth who are adjudicated as 3a-No Faults and 3c, and will continue to monitor how these particular youth impact caseload sizes moving forward.

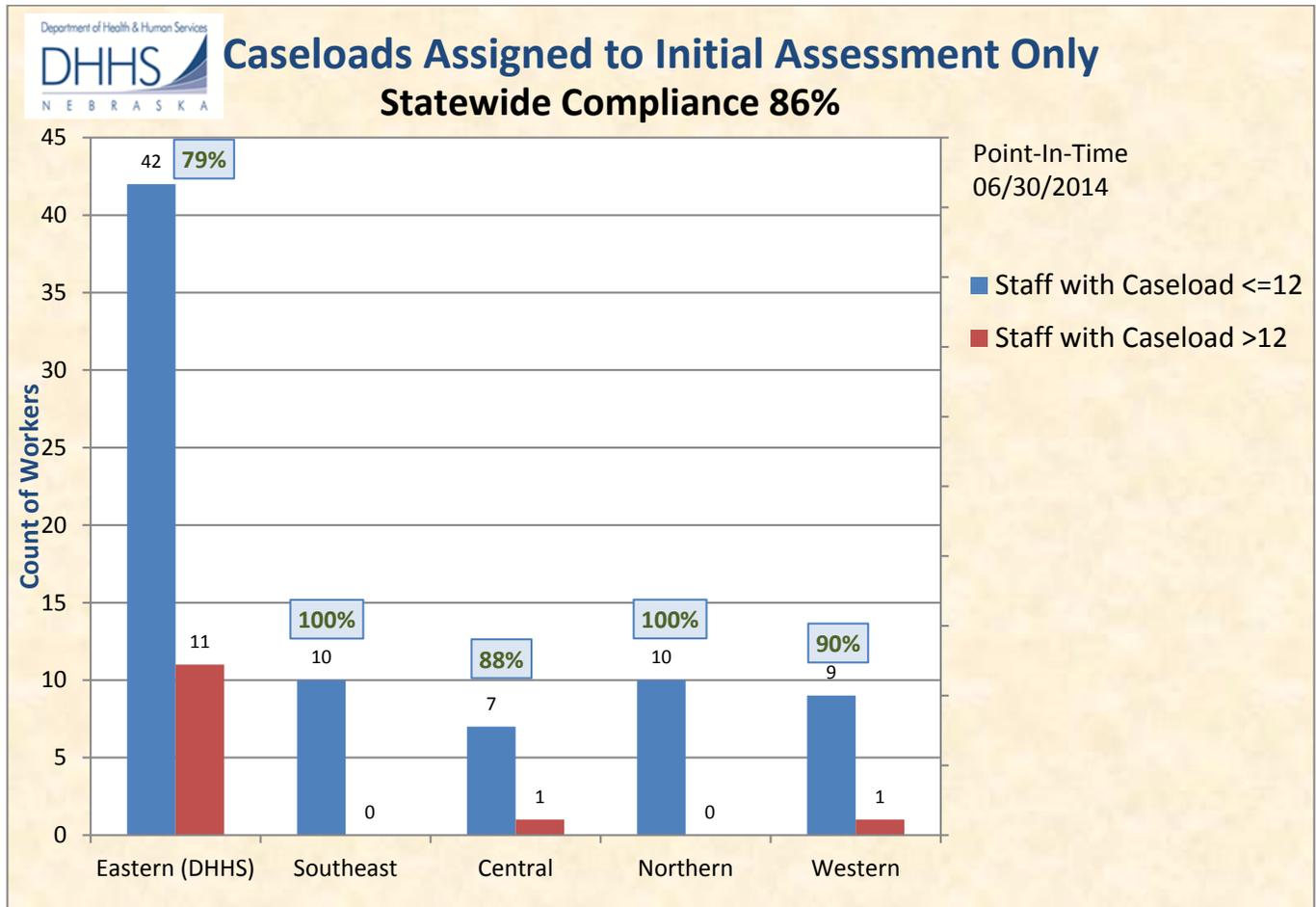
DCFS continues to use the methodology developed in March 2013 of un-duplicating all the cases and creating a weighted average for workers that legitimately have both initial assessment and ongoing work even for a short period to measure caseloads. This methodology only counts a youth once for caseload size reporting purposes.

The data below depicts Caseload Results for Initial Assessment, Ongoing, and Combined Initial Assessment and Ongoing Caseloads. As of June 30, 2014, Initial Assessment Caseloads were in 86% compliance, Ongoing Caseloads were in 84% compliance and those carrying a combined caseload of Initial Assessment and Ongoing Cases were in 74% compliance.



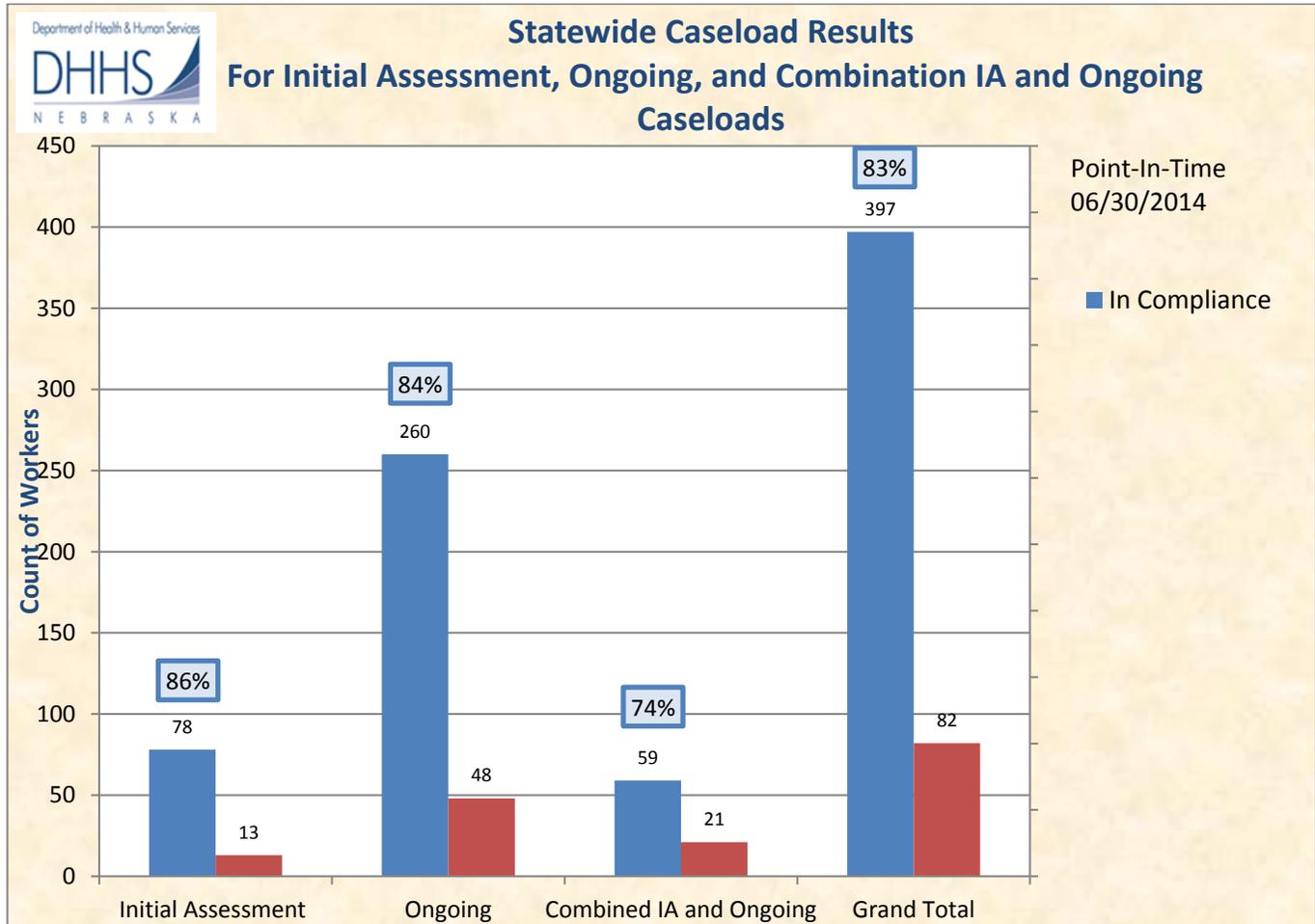
Required caseload per worker out of home youth standard <=16
 Required caseload per worker in home families standard <=17
 Required caseload per worker initial assessment Standard <=12

The data below depicts the percentage of compliance with caseloads assigned for initial assessment as of June 30, 2014. Initial assessments assigned to workers in the Eastern Service Area do not provide ongoing case management. Initial assessment workers in the Central, Northern and Western Service Areas may have combined caseloads of initial assessment and ongoing case management. The Southeast Service Area will assign initial assessments to ongoing workers if there is a case manager assigned to the family for which a new report is accepted during ongoing case management.



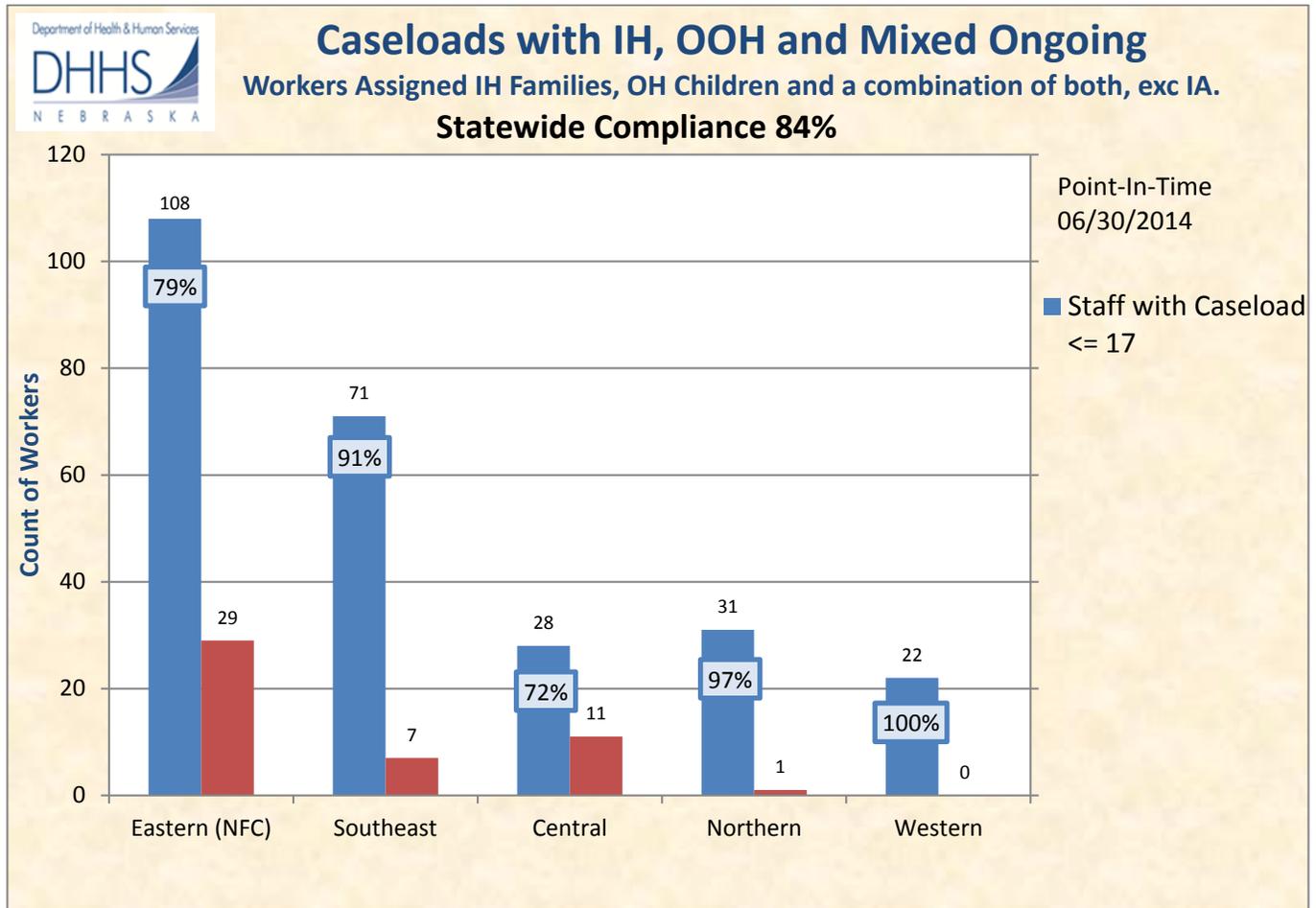
Required Caseload size <= 12 cases per worker for Initial Assessment Cases, cases are defined as a family.

The data depicted below illustrates the percentage of compliance with the caseload standards for combination caseloads of initial assessment and ongoing case management as of June 30, 2014. The Eastern Service Area is the only Service Area that does not have combined caseloads.



Out of Home Children Standard <=16
 In Home Families Standard <= 17
 Initial Assessment Standard <= 12

The data depicted below demonstrate the percentage of compliance standards with ongoing caseloads of both in-home and out-of-home cases, excluding initial assessment. As of June 30, 2014, the statewide compliance with the caseload standards was 84%.



Required Caseload size <= 17 cases per worker for In-Home cases, cases are defined as a family
 Required Caseload size <= 16 cases per worker for Out-of-Home youth

Fiscal Resources Necessary to Maintain Caseloads

The following table displays the amount of fiscal resources that DHHS would need to maintain its active staff, staff in training, and filling vacant positions within DHHS. Lead contractor staff and costs for maintaining their staff is not included in these calculations as these costs fall under contract. For that reason, this table displays only the amount of fiscal resources DHHS would need to maintain its own staff as of June 30, 2014.

Number of DHHS, CFSS and CFSS-Trainee positions as of 06/30/2014 with average annual salary and average annual benefits				
	Authorized Positions	Average Salary per Staff	Average Benefits per Staff*	Total Costs
CFSS	282	\$36,471.24	\$12,699.29	\$13,866,088.27
CFSS-TRAINEE	35	\$30,891.98	\$10,756.59	\$1,457,699.86
VACANCIES**	52	\$35,518.08	\$12,367.40	\$2,490,044.72
TOTAL STAFF	369			
Number of CFSS and CFSS-Trainee positions (excludes Adult Protective Services and Hotline Workers) as of 06/30/2014				
*Average benefits are calculated by the rate of 34.82%				
**Authorized unfilled positions				

The number of child welfare and juvenile service workers employed by the State of Nebraska and under contract with the State of Nebraska, and the average length of employment in these positions, by health and human services area and statewide

The following three tables show a count and percentage of CFSS and CFSS Trainee Workers by service area and statewide. The total number of CFSS/CFSS Trainees was 317 as of June 30, 2014. Statewide, worker's average length of service is 3.19 years.

Count of CFSS and CFSS Trainee Workers by Job Title and Service Area as of 6/30/2014							
		CSA	ESA	NSA	SESA	WSA	Total
Job Title	CHILD/FAMILY SERVICES SPECIALIST	36	40	58	99	49	282
	CHILD/FAMILY SERVICES SPECIALIST TRAINEE	7	12	2	14	0	35
Total		43	52	60	113	49	317

Percentage of CFSS and CFSS Trainee Workers by Job Title and Service Area as of 6/30/2014							
		CSA	ESA	NSA	SESA	WSA	Total
Job Title	CHILD/FAMILY SERVICES SPECIALIST	11.36%	12.62%	18.30%	31.23%	15.46%	88.96%
	CHILD/FAMILY SERVICES SPECIALIST TRAINEE	2.21%	3.79%	0.63%	4.42%	0.00%	11.04%
Total		13.56%	16.40%	18.93%	35.65%	15.46%	100.00%

Length of Service in Position as of 06/30/2014							
Job Title		CSA	ESA	NSA	SESA	WSA	ALL SERVICE AREAS
CHILD/FAMILY SERVICES SPECIALIST	Minimum	1 month	3 months	2 months	1 day	9 months	1 day
	Maximum	26 years	23 years	26 years	24 years	25 years	26 years
	Average (in years)**	2.99	4.74	4.97	2.18	4.22	3.57
CHILD/FAMILY SERVICES SPECIALIST TRAINEE	Minimum	1 day	6 days	4 months	1 day	N/A	1 day
	Maximum	7 months	4 months	6 months	3 months	N/A	7 months
	Average (in months)*	1.09	1.35	4.70	1.46	N/A	1.53
CFSS and CFSS TRAINEE	Minimum	1 day	6 days	2 months	1 day	9 months	1day
	Maximum	26 years	23 years	26 years	24 years	25 years	26 years
	Average (in years)	2.52	3.67	4.81	1.93	4.22	3.19
<i>Length of service in position is calculated by the difference between current date and employee classification seniority date. Years, months, and days given for minimum and maximum lengths of service are rounded to nearest whole number.</i>							
<i>**Average length of service in position is given in years for Child/Family Services Specialists and in months for Child/Family Services Specialist Trainees as their averages tended to be less than 1 year.</i>							

The following table shows the average length of service as of June 30, 2014, by position for Nebraska Families Collaborative (NCF), the contract agency providing ongoing case management in the Eastern Service Area (ESA).

Table 6. NFC Job Title	Length of Employment
Family Permanency Specialist	1.53 years
Family Permanency Supervisor	2.88 years

Outcomes of cases by health and human services area and statewide

Youth Exiting Care in State Fiscal Year 2014 Includes In-Home and Out-of-Home, HHS and OJS						
Service Area	Reunification	Adoption	Independent Living	Guardianship	Other Reason	Grand Total
CENTRAL	300 62.89%	44 9.22%	23 4.82%	30 6.29%	80 16.77%	477 100.00%
EASTERN	924 67.64%	200 14.64%	101 7.39%	90 6.59%	51 3.73%	1366 100.00%
NORTHERN	361 71.06%	51 10.04%	28 5.51%	24 4.72%	44 8.66%	508 100.00%
SOUTHEAST	701 61.38%	140 12.26%	87 7.62%	50 4.38%	164 14.36%	1142 100.00%
WESTERN	275 66.11%	42 10.10%	32 7.69%	37 8.89%	30 7.21%	416 100.00%
STATE	2561 65.52%	477 12.20%	271 6.93%	231 5.91%	369 9.44%	3909 100.00%

Source: N-FOCUS

A primary goal of CFS' child welfare and juvenile services staff is to protect children and youth from abuse and neglect, to promote permanency and stability in their living situations, to safely serve more children in their own homes, to safely reduce the number of children and youth in state custody, and to provide for community safety.

As displayed in the chart above, CFS discharged 3909 children and youth from state care into some form of permanency in 2013. CFS saw an increase of 2% in children who were adopted from last year. The transfer of children to Probation, described earlier in this report, have impacted several of the outcomes for children exiting care. Notably, the majority (65.52%) of children exiting care were reunified with their parents. This is a decrease from 72% last year. Also, there was an increase in the percent of youth exiting to 'Other Reason' from 4.51% last year to 9.44% this year. The 'Other Reason' category accounts for the transfer of children to Probation.

The average cost of training child welfare and juvenile service workers employed by the State of Nebraska and those providing direct services to children and families under contract with the State of Nebraska, by health and human services area and statewide

Training continues to be conducted in partnership between the DHHS and the Center on Children, Families, and the Law (CCFL) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

	Costs
DHHS Costs for CCFL Services	\$2,723,614
CCFL Contribution	\$1,146,665
CFS Staff Costs While in Training	\$1,290,650
Total Training Costs	\$5,160,929

Currently, NFC provides ongoing case management in the Eastern Service Area. The cost of training staff for the initial period of hire from July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014, was \$477,524 for an average cost of \$4,823 per staff. NFC reports ongoing training for their staff at a cost of \$159,474.

This concludes the Department’s SFY 2013/2014 annual report regarding child welfare/juvenile services caseload levels. The Department appreciates the opportunity to share this information each year and welcomes continued review by the Legislature and the public.